**Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, Linda (June, 200) *Connecting Schools, Families***

***and Communities, (ASCA)* Professional School Counseling, (3:5)**

**Summary and Reflection:**

Recent years has seen many changes in the involvement of communities and families in the educational setting. The impetus for the change has been the belief that by strengthen the social services agencies and community health departments that serve children and families it would directly improve the effectiveness of schools. The thought was to strengthen the relationships for students and to be proactive with some of the issues that affect the performance of students in the classroom.

The article discusses how schools and neighborhoods are located in communities but often with no “bridges to the mainland”. Families live close to neighbors but often have very little connections to each other or to the schools that their children attend. These entities affect each other in positive and negative ways but seldom work as one unit. The premise of this whole article is that all of these entities (home, schools, and communities) must collaborate with each other if they are to “minimize problems and maximize results”.

These connections between school, home and communities are not necessarily difficult to establish but are more difficult to maintain. In order to maintain this needed effective collaboration some of the requirements are: common vision, cohesive policy, and basic reform. By services working together and sharing costs and overhead waste could be eliminated and efforts could be coordinated.

Schools must realize the barriers to learning that exists for students and how to best meet those needs if learning is to be optimized. In the past schools have not used the available resources or have they coordinated efforts with outside agencies. This must become of utmost importance for schools if learning is to be maximized for students.

Some of the specific suggestions are:

* Share use of school or neighborhood facilities, equipment and other resources
* Enhance safety
* Raise funds and pursue grants
* Underwrite activity
* Acquire nonprofessional volunteers and professionals as well as others with special expertise to provide assistance, pro bono services, mentoring, and training
* Share and disseminate information
* Network and provide mutual support
* Share responsibility for planning, implementing and evaluation of programs and services
* Build and maintain infrastructure
* Expand opportunities for community services, internships, jobs, recreation, enrichment
* Enhance public relations
* Share celebrations
* Build a sense of community

The article ends with a note of caution about effective implementation. Without proper planning, visioning and facilitation even the best intentions with not live up to your expectations. Each session must be skillfully facilitated with specific agenda items and outcomes.

This article really opened my eyes to the scope of the problem facing schools today when dealing with the mental and social needs of today’s youth. I had never really thought much about the importance of schools, families and communities working together in ways that are different that they currently work. The article made me realize how working differently could enhance the outcome in school for students. I found myself thinking about how sad some of these efforts are for students as most are preventable with effective home environments. I had to remind myself that that is not the norm for lots of students today.

I am very hopeful that with these needed reforms in place that students will be more successful in the classroom. It also made me think of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and how students are not able to learn in school when their social and emotional needs are not being met. We must start making a serious effort to meet those needs.